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Utah Legislative Update: June 2018

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Primary Election Season

Primary Elections might seem like the pre-season warm ups to the big game in November. In many respects they are, but for some districts the Primary Election is THE election because of the make up of the district. Thanks to SB54 and Utah's dual path to the Primary Election, there are more Primary Elections this year than usual. If you love a good election match up and your home district isn't that entertaining, check out a few of these races instead. Don't forget to turn in your ballot by Tuesday, June 26th. More election information can be found at www.elections.utah.gov

U.S. Senate Republican Primary: Mitt Romney vs. Mike Kennedy

- Really this is THE most important election happening in Utah in a long time. This particular senate seat has been held by Orrin Hatch for 42 years. It features Utah's favorite adopted son, and 2002 Winter Olympic savior Mitt Romney, vs. a relatively unknown state legislator, Mike Kennedy, who is both a doctor and an attorney. Don't read too much into Romney coming in second with Republican delegates. That crowd doesn't like anyone that used the signature gathering path to the Primary ballot. I predict the winner of this Primary will be the new junior senator from Utah come November despite facing a Democratic challenger.

Utah 3rd Congressional District: John Curtis vs. Chris Herrod

- This is a re-match of the 2017 Special Election race to replace Jason Chaffetz. Curtis won in 2017, but couldn't secure enough delegate votes to avoid a rematch with Herrod in convention this year. Don't read too much into the rematch as delegates are mad that Curtis used signature-gathering in 2017 and again in 2018, but a full Republican Primary is a different story than just delegates' views.

Four-Way Primary in State House District 24: Jen Dailey-Provost vs. Jacquelyn Orton vs. Darin Mann vs. Igor Limansky

- In Utah, a four-way primary is just unheard of, so this race for the Salt Lake City Avenues neighborhood should be very interesting to watch. There is a candidate who fits nearly every faction inside the Utah Democratic party. This is one of the bluest seats in the State House so it's all but certain that the winner of the Primary will become the State Representative in November.

Two Three-Way Primaries: State House 20 and Senate District 26

- Having two different three-way Primary races would have been unique and different if they hadn't been topped by the four-way Primary above. Still, a three-way primary is a special animal where candidates can divide the vote in interesting ways that may allow a dark horse to take the seat.

State House 20: Matt Jensen vs. Melissa Garff Ballard vs. Glen Jenkins

- The retirement of Rep. Becky Edwards, traditionally one of the most moderate Republicans in the State Legislature, brought about this interesting three-way Republican Primary for the North Salt Lake, Bountiful, Wood Cross, and West Bountiful seat. This is one where two candidates (Ballard and Jenkins) advanced based on signature gathering while Matt Jensen won the delegate vote. Jensen and Garff Ballard are seen as drawing from a similar pool of Republican voters, while Jenkins will likely be more attractive to the conservative to libertarian wing of the party. Still a red seat, the winner of this Primary will likely carry November as well.

State Senate 26: Brian Gorum vs. Ron Winterton vs. Jack Rubin

- This is a solidly red seat where the Primary winner will no doubt represent the district next session. Geography plays a large role in this race. The district encompasses parts of five different rural counties. Traditionally, it has been dominated by the Basin counties, but the dynamics in the district might be changing. Wasatch and Summit counties have enough voters to dominate the district if the right candidate comes along. Retiring State Senator Kevin Van Tassell was from Uintah County. Those vying to replace him include Brian Gorum from Uintah County, Ron Winterton from Duchesne County, and Jack Rubin from Summit County. The competing rural county politics and economic considerations of extractive industry loyal counties vs. bedroom counties to the broader Wasatch Front economy might just leave a path to victory for the Republican from Summit County in this fun race to watch.

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